

REMARKS

Entry of the foregoing and reconsideration of the application identified in caption, as amended, pursuant to and consistent with 37 C.F.R. §1.116 and in light of the remarks which follow, are respectfully requested.

At the outset, it is respectfully noted that Applicants have not received a Notice of References Cited (form PTO-892) from the Patent Office listing U.S. Patent No. 5,663,310 (*Shimoda et al*), which was relied on in the outstanding Official Action. Issuance of such Notice of References Cited citing *Shimoda et al* is respectfully requested.

It is noted that while the Official Action at page 1 indicates that dependent claims 23, 24, 32 and 33 stand objected to, the Official Action does not provide further explanation concerning the nature of such objection. In a telephone conference with Examiner Chowdhury on March 13, 2006, the Examiner clarified that each of dependent claims 23, 24, 32 and 33 contains allowable subject matter and would be in condition for allowance if amended to be in independent form including all the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. In this regard, Applicants note the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter with appreciation.

By the above amendments, claims 22-24, 32, 33 and 40-46 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 21 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 22 and 23. Claim 31 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 32. New claim 47 has been added which is directed to the subject matter of claims 21 and 24. New claims 48-53 directly or indirectly depend from claim 47, and recite the subject matter of claims 25-30, respectively. New claim 54 has been added which is directed to the subject matter of claims 31 and 33. New claims 55-60 directly or indirectly depend from claim 54, and recite the subject matter of claims 34-39, respectively. Entry of the foregoing

amendments is proper at least because they are effective to place the application in condition for allowance or in better form for appeal. See M.P.E.P. §714.12.

In the Official Action, claims 21, 22, 25-29, 31, 34-38, 41-44 and 46 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,663,310 (*Shimoda et al*). Claims 30, 39 and 45 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being obvious over *Shimoda et al* in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,978,247 (*Braudy et al*). The rejection of claims 39 and 41-46 is moot in light of the cancellation of such claims. Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit that the currently pending claims are allowable over the applied art for at least the following reasons.

As discussed above, the Examiner has advised that each of claims 23, 24, 32 and 33 contains allowable subject matter. In this regard, independent claim 21 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claims 22 and 23, which have been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Independent claim 31 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 32, which has been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. In addition, new claim 47 is directed to the subject matter of claims 21 and 24, claim 24 having been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. New claims 48-53 directly or indirectly depend from claim 47. Further, new claim 54 is directed to the subject matter of claims 31 and 33, claim 33 having been indicated as containing allowable subject matter. New claims 55-60 directly or indirectly depend from claim 54.

Thus, it is apparent that the outstanding §103(a) rejections are moot in light of the above claim amendments. Accordingly, for at least the above reasons, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

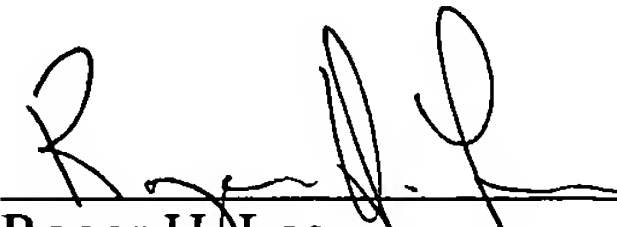
From the foregoing, further and favorable action in the form of a Notice of Allowance is believed to be next in order, and such action is earnestly solicited.

If there are any questions concerning this paper or the application in general, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

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